1:Huntingford E-4, 5 (1938-1939) 1953 FLA Dorobo FLA

THE DOROBO OF KIDOÍ (KERITTA)

History

The group described by Lambert as living at Keritta on top of the escarpment, on the edge of the Forest Reserve 10 miles north of Limuru, is that classed as Kidoi in *Anthropos* 1951.[1] It was seen by Thomson in 1883 at the place known to the Swahili as Mianzini (" place of bamboos ") where, he says, a Dorobo village was established for selling food bought from the Kikuyu to the Masai and the traders.[2] This group is part of the Kikuyu Dorobo who occupied the land before the Kikuyu came. The process by which the Dorobo had completely lost their land by 1907 when Tolebi passed through is summed up by the Kenya Land Commission as one " partly of alliance and partnership and partly of adoption and absorption, partly of payment, and largely of force and chicanery."[3]

Organization

There are no chiefs, control being in the hands of a council of elders, with a leading elder called *kirumbindet*, as among the Kipkaruruk. Marriage is patrilocal, and descent patrilineal. Polygyny is permitted. Boys are circumcised, and girls are subjected to clitoridectomy. There appears to be some sort of age-set system, but Lambert's statement is not very clear on this point.

There are said to be nine clans, with Nandi-looking names beginning with the prefix *kap-* (which does not imply territoriality, but simply means " group of "). These clans are sometimes referred to by Masai clan names, or even by Kikuyu clan names. The word for clan is *ol-gilatat*, derived from the Masai *ol-gilata*, " clan," and not, as Lambert suggests, from *ol-gelata*, which means not " plain," but " side path."[4]

Religion

A so-called supreme being called *Tarwit*[5] is recognized; and the statement describing ancestral spirits as " active members " of a lineage implies the existence of an ancestor cult.

SOURCE: H. E. Lambert, *The systems of land tenure in the Kikuyu Land Unit. Part I. History of the tribal occupation of the land*, pp. 67, 68.

[1] S1.91, p. 8.
[2] *Through Masai Land*, 1887, p. 395.
[3] *Kenya Land Commission, Report*, 1933, p. 60.
[4] = Nandi *tarwa*, " slope."

Africa, East. Hobley.

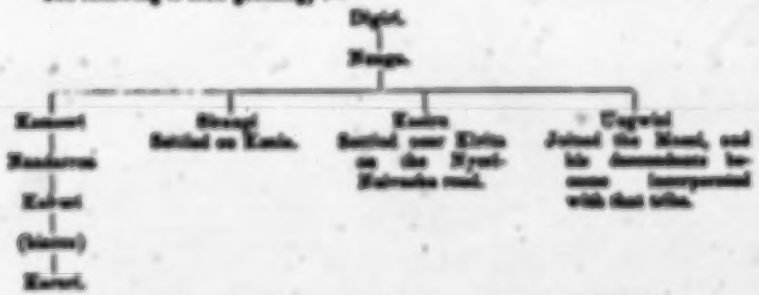
Notes on the Dorobo People and other Tribes; gathered from Chief Karuri and others. *By C. W. Hobley, C.M.G.* 78

101 The true Dorobo people are called Aat by the Elkuyu people and call themselves Aggish (or Oggish) or Ogiemboo.

Mr. Hollis tells me that the Nandi call them Okiek (singular Ureet), the Masai Il-Torobo (singular Ol-Torobonot).

131 [698] 193 614 [769] They inhabited the whole of the East Africa highlands from Nandi to Kenia before the Masai invaded the country. The most important clan among the Aggish is the Digirr (*see* MAN, 1905, 81), the name Digirr being that of their earliest known ancestor. Digirr, however, appears to have lived so long ago that all details about him are lost, and the first ancestor remembered by most is one Nenga, who was a very powerful person, and nearly all the Aggish are said to trace their origin to this chief.

The following is their genealogy :—



614 [304] [191] [362] 193 [698] Kamuri, Sirongi, and Kaiira are now the names of three clans of the Aggish.

Before the Masai came some of the Aggish circumcised and they all spoke one language. The totem of the Aggish is the ant-bear, which is called Ungwiri, they do not eat carnivorous animals or birds of prey, but eat all other animals and birds.

The Digirr have a distinct legend of the invasion of the Masai : they describe how one day a Digirr hunter on the Kinare Narok saw a great company of people coming from the north ; the hunter was afraid and hid among the rocks, but he was seen,

dead, and to have sacrificed to them: the few still surviving are believed to sacrifice every year (or more probably every Mwaka) to their ancestors. They spoke a *Nandi* language*: but languages go for nothing in this country, where a whole tribe will with the greatest facility in the course of a single generation change its language. The Dorobo themselves say that they, the Masai and the Elkeyo, are the descendants of a common ancestral tribe called the Eldigiri, and that their ancestors came from beyond Mount Kenya. They also maintain that the clans of all three tribes are identical: thus, for instance, the Aimbakwee clan in the Mokwon of the Masai: the Anjiro, the Tarsaro: the Ambui, the Molelyan: the Akhambiko, the Aisir: and so forth.

Their Masai name of ɔl Tarokʉt might, perhaps, imply that they are descended from a tribe of dwarfs: but though there are undoubtedly pigmy tribes of Dorobo, such as the Mɔtik of the bamboo forests of Mount Kenya, the Dorobo in existence at the present day are of much the same stature as other tribes in East Africa. The dwarfish figures of the Masai Dorobo may possibly be explained by the life they lead.

Compared with other natives the Dorobo are not deficient in intelligence: in fact, in many respects rather the contrary is the case. Dorobo wisdom and cunning are proverbial amongst the Elkeyo and Masai, who consult them in cases of sickness and accidents.

E. R. DUNDAS.

REVIEWS.

* It is difficult to account for the peculiar fact that they spoke Nandi. There are, it appears to me, reasons for believing that a large number of tribes now living in East Africa migrated from the north o/d Mount Kenya, and passed through the Elkeyo country. Many of these, and this may have been the case with the Nandi, Lumbwa, and Suk, may have settled down in those fertile regions for a period sufficiently lengthy to have impressed their language on the aboriginal inhabitants. It is quite possible that very large areas may have been abandoned during, and subsequent also, such emigrations.

† Dorop, pl. doropin, means short in Masai.

‡ Eldigiri and Masai are different names for the same people: they are also known to the Elkeyo as Amitkwiskwon. This name is said by some to have been applied originally to all the Dorobo or Aá. The name Aá itself might possibly mean the rulers, in which case it bears out the theory that the Dorobo were originally the ruling tribe in the country. It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that the word Aáki, one of East Africa's principal rivers, is possibly the same as Aá, the Elkeyo name for the Dorobo.

According to Mr. Hinderquer, of the Church Missionary Society, the name Amitkwiskwon means child-stealers. I think myself, however, that the name means the *fierce little people*, and is derived from —kwiskwa in the sense given by the Elkeyo to a *fierce people*—it, for instance, finds name for the Masai—the word Chinese means *children eat*, in a secondary sense, *little people*.

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Succession is patrilineal and marriage patrilocal. Polygyny is practised. The lineage is a functional continuum, including ancestral spirits as active members while they are still remembered by the persons responsible (so to speak) for keeping them alive by acts of memory and communion, the continuum being of the perpetually successive rather than of the periodically recurrent type, that is to say, a boy is his father's second self rather than his grandfather or great-grandfather born again.

Initiation includes a circumcision rite for boys and a pre-marital rite of clitoridectomy for girls. Age-grading is based on male initiation. There are no generation-ages except in so far as the Dorobo imitated or joined in the ituika of the Kikuyu and the eunoto of the Masai. The word they use for the handing-over ceremony is eunotwet. Alternating ages or generations are distinguished as onet ap-tai (the right hand) and onet ap-katap (the left hand). When the Kikuyu system is referred to Mwangi is the former and Maina the latter, but the expressions were probably used originally of the Masai right-hand and left-hand circumcision groups.

There are no indigenous chiefs, the judiciary and legislature being a council of elders. Such an elder is called kiruogindet (pl. kiruogik). A kiruogindet has much the same function as a Kikuyu muthamaki. There is no laibon but formerly the Dorobo owed allegiance to the laibon of the Masai.

They recognize one Supreme Being, called Tururit (compare the Suk Tororut). There appears to be no cult of so-called Sun Worship. The sacred trees, used for prayers to Tururit, are, for rain the bamboo (a solitary clump), for honey the mukeu, and, in connection with circumcision ceremonies, the muthai and the mutamaiyu.

78. Little or nothing is known of the relationship of the Dorobo of Southern Kikuyu with other Dorobo sections. The "Dorobo Committee" called them the Kikuyu Escarpment group, and remarked that they were first found in the Aberdares but left there and went to the Masai Reserve, whence they were ejected. At the time the Committee sat this group was living as forest squatters in the

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715 souls of later generations of the dead find their last resting-place." (2)

2. op. cit.

We must suppose the Meru and the [p. 125] Mwimbi would have thought the departed spirits of the conquered tribes or, in the latter case, the blood of their dead remained to harry them. They probably arranged for some propitiation, and inasmuch as there was intermarriage between the conquerors and the conquered in each case the possibility of a final peaceful phase in acquisition cannot be ruled out.

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715 So, as the spirits of the dead were believed in general to stay
626 just where they had lived on earth (though underground) and to retain in some degree (and possibly enhanced) the sanctions of the land-clan complex, we must suppose the cult of ancestors would operate to some extent to save the land from usurpation by another tribe by any means which left them unappeased. Exchange, adoption, intermarriage—yes; annihilation or ejection—no.

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425 Implications of the cult of ancestors
769 But such exchange, if it occurred, would have to be conditioned in some way so that the seigniory remained unaltered or the new seigniory was adequately bonded with the old one in perpetuity. The Kikuyu say "we bought the Dorobo out, we did not drive them out." But though the cult of earth-bound ancestors affords sufficient reason to believe the second half of this assertion it gives us almost equally sufficient reason to reject the first. We must imagine the Dorobo had a similar belief (1); for otherwise we must not give it as

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1. The Dorobo of Kerilta, who are the ones with whom we are particularly concerned, have assured me that they always have had such a cult. The ancestral spirits are known as oii(k). Some are doubtful where these spirits live; others say they live in the ground. A man "sacrifices" to his deceased father.

our reason for Kikuyu non-belligerence; if the Dorobo living disregarded them in land transactions any Kikuyu fears of immanent
[i.e., the Kikuya acquisition of Dorobo land. - Analyst]